

WASHINGTON STATE MAIN STREET PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION TO THE TIER SYSTEM

A healthy, thriving downtown or neighborhood commercial district is an asset to any community that is endeavoring to sustain or grow its local economy and create or retain jobs. The Washington State Main Street Program helps communities throughout the state preserve and revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their traditional business districts using a range of services and assistance to meet the needs of communities interested in revitalization.

The WSMSP uses the successful Main Street™ methodology developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as its foundation for assistance. This approach emphasizes four critical areas of revitalization: **organization** helps everyone work towards the same goals and maximizes involvement of public and private leaders within the community; **promotion** brings people back downtown by helping to attract visitors, shoppers, and investors; **design** enhances a district's appearance and pedestrian amenities while preserving its historic features; and **economic restructuring** stimulates business development and helps strengthen the district's economic base.

Services are offered through a tiered system. If your community is just beginning to explore downtown revitalization, does not wish to become a Start-Up or designated Main Street community, or wishes to use the Main Street Approach™ in a non-traditional commercial setting, there is the **AFFILIATE** level (see page 2). For communities that are exploring the possibility of future Main Street designation, there is the **START-UP** level (see page 3). And, for communities that have a population less than 100,000, or for neighborhood commercial districts, with a high degree of commitment and readiness towards using the Main Street Approach in a traditional downtown setting, there is the **MAIN STREET™** designation level (see page 5).

The Washington State Main Street Program also serves as a general clearinghouse for the latest tools and techniques in downtown development. General information, primary and secondary research, project development assistance information, and audio-visual and resource materials are available from the program to individuals and organizations interested in downtown revitalization.

For additional information, please contact us at:

Washington State Main Street Program

Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

128 10th Avenue SW, PO Box 42525

Olympia, Washington 98504-2525

360-725-4056, susank@cted.wa.gov

360-725-4112, sheris@cted.wa.gov

www.downtown.wa.gov

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

The Affiliate option provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community commitment and readiness levels. It is for communities that are just starting a downtown revitalization effort, those that do not wish to become a designated Main Street community, or those that wish to apply the Main Street Approach™ in a non-traditional commercial setting.

How to Apply

Communities may become an Affiliate at any time by completing a brief application available at: www.downtown.wa.gov.

A core feature of the service to Affiliates is access to training by state and national downtown development experts. Affiliates will have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field and to network with peers from around the state.

Requirements	
Have a broad-based revitalization organization	The organization does not have to be an independent nonprofit and may include Chambers of Commerce, local governments, commercial neighborhood district organizations, merchant groups, etc.
Attend trainings	Representatives must attend at least one WSMSP training per year to remain active as a Downtown Affiliate.
Take time to Learn About the Main Street Approach™	This is the foundation of all WSMSP assistance.
Services	
Workshops and Conferences	WSMSP sponsored training by a variety of experts on key downtown development topics. Discounts/scholarships available for some of the trainings.
Local Visits	State staff available as resources permit to do a “walk about” visit and provide downtown revitalization input to local organization.
Telephone Consultation	State staff available for phone consultations.
Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program	WSMSP designates eligible downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization organizations for this program. Designated organizations must submit a special designation request form and meet applicant eligibility requirements to qualify.
Downtown Resource Lending Library	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Samples and examples of downtown activities and projects on a variety of subjects are also available.
Eligibility for Award Program	Downtown Affiliates are eligible to submit nominations for the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.

Please note - Affiliate level membership within the Tier System does not authorize a local organization to use the Main Street trademarked name.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: START-UP AND MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES

All organizations applying for Start-Up and Main Street designation must meet the following general eligibility criteria and requirements:

1. Have a population of no more than 100,000 based on the 2000 Census (cities and towns only). WSMSP priorities include providing technical assistance to rural counties. Neighborhood commercial districts in urban areas or cities with larger populations should call the WSMSP office for specifics on eligibility.
2. The boundaries/primary focus area of the organization must be that of a traditional downtown or neighborhood commercial district – basically a “Main Street district”. This area must be:
 - a. A traditional central business district and center for socio-economic interaction.
 - b. Characterized by a cohesive core of historic and/or older commercial and mixed-use buildings that represent the community’s architectural heritage. It may also include compatible in-fill development.
 - c. Have a sufficient mass of businesses, buildings, and density to be effective.
 - d. Typically arranged with most of the buildings side-by-side and fronting the sidewalk along a main street with intersecting side streets.
 - e. Compact, easily walkable, and pedestrian-oriented.

In general, districts containing newer low-density automobile-oriented commercial development (e.g., sprawl), strip malls, and enclosed shopping/entertainment centers will not qualify for designation unless they are fully integrated into the fabric of a traditional “Main Street district”.

START- UP COMMUNITIES

Communities that are exploring the possibility of future Main Street designation are encouraged to participate first at the Start-Up level. Start-Up services help communities build an appropriate organizational and funding base for a comprehensive downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization program, as well as help prepare them for the Main Street application process. Participation as a Start-Up Community does not guarantee selection as a designated Main Street community, but it can help communities strengthen their revitalization efforts.

How to Apply

Application rounds will be held on a space available basis as resources permit. For additional information, call 360-725-4056.

Requirements	
Work in a traditional “Main Street district”	The district must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™. See general eligibility criteria #2, listed above.
Use the Main Street Approach™	Main Street provides a proven and comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional commercial districts. Following the Main Street Approach™ is a requirement of initial and on-going participation.
Requirements (continued)	

Form a downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization organization.	Start-Ups must be willing to form a separate, nonprofit organization with the sole mission of revitalizing the downtown or neighborhood commercial district and serve as an advocate for the “heart and soul” of the community.
Develop diversified and sustainable funding	Start-Ups must be willing to work toward developing diversified and sustainable program funding.
Employ an executive director	Start-Ups are not expected to employ staff, but must be working toward it.
Sign a Letter of Agreement	Local commitment and support in working toward future Main Street designation is integral to a Start-Up program. See “Main Street” section below. Communities accepted at the Start-Up level will be asked to sign a letter of agreement with the WSMSP indicating responsibilities of each.

Services at the Start-Up level are provided for two years, however communities must actively participate and build organizational readiness to remain at this level for the entire commitment period. Start-Up communities must also meet on-going administrative requirements, attend WSMSP trainings, and progress in addressing WSMSP staff recommendations.

Services	
Application Visit/Community Presentation	A preliminary assessment of the community’s readiness to proceed will be conducted. The Main Street Approach™ slide show will also be presented at a community meeting if needed. (On-site, pre-selection)
Organizational Visit (Yr 1 & 2)	Year-one visit to include start-up checklist discussion and fundraising options. Year-two visit to identify progress and provide suggestions for moving forward. (On-site)
Work Plan Assistance (Yr 1 & 2)	Year-one visit to include a facilitated work plan session. Year-two will be a work plan update session. (On-site)
Regional Board Training	As needed training by state staff, experienced board members, and experts in the field.
Scholarships	Scholarships are available to the Annual Downtown Revitalization Training Institute. (Certain conditions apply)
New Manager Orientation	If a program manager is hired during the start-up phase, orientation and training is available providing certain conditions are met. (Olympia)
Main Street Network Meetings/Manager Retreat	Regular training and networking opportunities are provided. Once a community has hired a downtown manager and manager orientation has been completed, the manager is invited to attend.
Workshops and Conferences	WSMSP sponsored training by a variety of experts on key downtown development topics. Discounts/scholarships available for some of the trainings. Attendance is required.
Telephone Consultations	State staff available for phone consultations.
Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program	WSMSP designates eligible downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization organizations for this program. Designated organizations must submit a special designation request form and meet applicant eligibility requirements to qualify.
Downtown Resource Lending Library	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Extensive “sample and example” files are also available.
Award Program Eligibility	Start-Up communities are eligible to submit nominations to the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.

Please note - Start-Up level membership within the Tier System does not authorize a local organization to use the Main Street trademarked name.

MAIN STREET™ COMMUNITIES

The Washington State Main Street Program provides a full-range of assistance to designated Main Street communities, from intensive services to meet the needs of new Main Street communities to services that help mature programs maintain focus and effectiveness. Designated Main Street programs work to develop the critical tools needed to undertake comprehensive downtown revitalization, such as design and economic incentives, market driven promotions, and business retention and recruitment programs.

How to Apply

Application rounds will be held as resources permit. Communities that are exploring the possibilities of future Main Street designation are encouraged to participate as a Start-Up community first. For additional information, call 360-725-4056.

Requirements	
Work in a traditional “Main Street district”	The district must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™. See general eligibility criteria #2, listed on page 3.
Use the Main Street Approach™	Main Street provides a proven and comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional commercial districts. Following the Main Street Approach™ is a requirement of initial and on-going participation.
Have a downtown organization in place	The downtown constituency is unique and has not been adequately served by traditional economic and business development groups. A separate, independent nonprofit organization with the sole mission of revitalizing downtown and serving as an advocate for the “heart and soul” of the community has been found to be the most successful way to reverse decline and foster progress.
Have diversified and sustainable program funding in place	Financial stability is crucial to staying mission-focused. Besides covering salaries, downtown organizations must provide funding to cover rent, utilities, travel, training, and an active program of work. Budgets will vary by community, but there are basic threshold numbers available from the WSMSP.
Employ an executive director	Paid professional staff to manage and coordinate the revitalization effort is critical. Communities with populations over 3,500 need full-time management to be effective. Communities with populations under 3,500 may hire a part-time program manager (minimum of 25 hours per week) though success with part-time assistance will be more limited.
Sign a Letter of Agreement	Local commitment and support is critical to Main Street success. Designated communities must sign a Letter of Agreement with the WSMSP indicating responsibilities of each.

In addition to these requirements, designated Main Street communities must meet on-going administrative requirements, including developing a comprehensive work plan; regular attendance at WSMSP trainings; submitting quarterly reports including economic development statistics; show progress in addressing program assessment recommendations; meet National Main Street Accreditation requirements; and maintain a National Main Street Network membership.

First Year Services and Technical Assistance	
Services are listed in the general order in which they are provided	
Application Visit	A preliminary assessment of the community's readiness to proceed will be conducted. (On-site, pre-selection)
Organizational Visit / Main Street 101 Training	State staff addresses organizational issues including roles and responsibilities of staff and board. Training is also provided on the Main Street Approach™. (On-site)
Work Plan Assistance	State staff helps the local program develop a basic foundational work plan based on local community needs and desires. (On-site)
Resource Team Visit	A team of experts in the four points of Main Street™ is assembled to objectively assess the local program area and make recommendations. (On-site, year-one or year-two on an "as needed basis")
Vision Development Visit	State staff facilitates a community process to develop a user-friendly vision statement for the district. (On-site, year-one or year-two)
National Main Street™ Accreditation	State staff qualifies local programs annually for National Main Street™ Accreditation.
National Main Street Center Network Membership	Benefits include subscription to newsletter, discount for publications and conference, a members-only website, and a hot line.
Second through Fourth Year Services and Technical Assistance	
Specialist Visits	One-day visits by state staff and/or downtown development specialists to help communities address specific issues. (On-site, available as resources allow)
Work Plan Assistance	State staff helps the local program develop and maintain a comprehensive work plan. (On-site)
Local Program Review	State staff assesses the progress of the organization. (On-site, provided every two to three years as resources allow)
National Main Street™ Accreditation	State staff qualifies local programs annually for National Main Street™ Accreditation.
Fifth Year and Beyond Services and Technical Assistance	
Specialist Visits	State staff and specialists available on request as resources allow.
Work Plan Assistance	State staff available on request as resources allow to help the local program maintain a comprehensive work plan. (On-site)
Local Program Review	State staff assesses the progress of the organization. (On-site, provided every three to four years as resources allow)
National Main Street™ Accreditation	State staff qualifies local programs annually for National Main Street™ Accreditation.
Program Support and Professional Development	
New Manager Orientation	Orientation and training is available for new downtown managers. (Olympia)
Main Street Network Meetings	Regular training and networking opportunities are provided. Managers must attend. Board members are encouraged to attend.
Main Street Manager Retreat	Special extended training and networking opportunity. Managers must attend.
Regional Board Training	As needed training by state staff, experienced board members, and specialists.
Scholarships	Scholarships to the National Main Streets Conference and the Downtown Revitalization Training Institute may be provided. (Certain conditions apply)
Workshops and Conferences	WSMSP sponsored training by a variety of experts on key downtown development topics. Discounts/scholarships available for some of the trainings. Attendance is required.
Telephone Consultations	State staff available for phone consultations.

Program Support and Professional Development (continued)	
Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program	WSMSP designates eligible downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization organizations for this program. Designated organizations must submit a special designation request form and meet applicant eligibility requirements to qualify.
Downtown Resource Lending Library	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Samples and examples of downtown activities and projects on a variety of subjects are also available.
Marketing	
Public Relations	Press coverage and exposure is provided through various media and marketing materials.
Main Street™	Communities at this level may use the Main Street™ trademarked name.
Award Program Eligibility	All Main Street™ communities are eligible to submit nominations for the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.

TIER SYSTEM AT-A-GLANCE

	DOWNTOWN AFFILIATE	START-UP	NEW MAIN STREET	MATURE MAIN STREET
REQUIREMENTS				
Traditional Main Street District		X	X	X
Use Main Street Approach		X	X	X
Independent Downtown Organization		Work toward	X	X
Diversified & Sustainable Program Funding		Work toward	X	X
Employ Executive Director		Work toward	X	X
Application	X (1 pg., brief)	X	X	
Letter of Agreement		X	X	X
Attend Trainings	1 per year	X	X	X
SERVICES				
Resource Lending Library	X	X	X	X
Telephone Consultations	X	X	X	X
Workshop & Conference Discount	X	X	X	X
Award Program Eligibility	X	X	X	X
Tax Credit Incentive Program Designation	Must apply and meet eligibility requirements	Must apply and meet eligibility requirements	Must apply and meet eligibility requirements	Must apply and meet eligibility requirements
Local "Walk About" Visit	As res. Allow			
Work Plan Assistance		X	X	On request
Main Street Network Trng.		X (mgr. invited)	X	X
Manager Retreat		X (mgr. Invited)	X	X
Regional Board Trng.		As needed	As needed	As needed
New Manager Orientation & Training		X	X	X
Discounts/Scholarships to Trainings	X	X	X	X
Ntl. Main Street Center Mbrshp.			X (first year)	
Application Visit/Community Presentation		X	X	
Organizational/ "101" Visit		X	X	
Resource Team Visit			As needed	As res. allow
Vision Development Visit			X	
Specialist Visits			As res. allow	As res. allow
Local Program Review			X 1 yr., 2-3 yrs.	X 3-4 yrs.
National Main Street Accreditation			X	X